

While some hardier, more organized souls seem to sail thru the holidays without missing even one beat of a Christmas carol, there are far more of us frantically searching for the right gift on Christmas Eve, baking cookies at midnight and the like. You may know the story well—despite your well-laid holiday plans. Christmas seems to be slapped together with too many last minute details and no time to relax and enjoy the festivities. Resolve now to take a calmer approach to Christmas. 1980. You need no special organizational skills, but you do need to plan ahead to simplify. It's easy and it can make your holidays merrier.

Start with your traditional holiday plans. We all fall prey to a personal pattern of holiday chores and activities: the same basic gift list, one or more holiday gatherings for friends and family, perhaps travel to visit grandparents, activities at church and school, baking and decorating. Take an honest look at the family calendar and decide what is and is not realistically possible. Stick to those events and traditions that have meaning for your family and weed out the rest. Once you have pared down your priorities, tackle each of your holi-

day chores and see how you can simplify your Christmas lifestyle.

Shopping consumes more of our pre-holiday energies than anything

else. You can organize the shopping in several ways. Make a list now-if not sooner-of those you buy gifts for and keep it handy to make suggestions or additions. One tactic is to use the same one-size gift for as many people as possible. Consider handsome stationery, magazine subscriptions, photo frames, manicure sets, any one of the male female gifts we all need but never buy ourselves. Now go thru your gift list and note all of the potential recipients. What's wrong with giving your sister, mother-in-law and Uncle Harry each a box of personalized stationery if they all write letters? Last year I found and used two of these one-size gifts to great advantage. First, I gathered calendars suitable to the personal interests of our army of babysitters, helpful neighbors and aunts-who-have-everything. I found them all in one stop at a bookstore for a relatively low price. They are easily mailed and that's a plus. My other one-size gift was a small cheese and snack pack from a retail specialty chain. This may not be original, but it's always a boon to a busy family with an active social life. And, the store will usually ship for you—another timesaving plus.

The sooner you shop, the sooner you can mail gifts. It may seem pre-mature to haul your packages to the Post Office on the day after Thanksgiving, but as the hoilday draws near you will have more demands on your time. We all know how easy it is to let mail slide until the week before Christmas and then wonder if it will be delivered in time at all. Start shopping first for those gifts you send away. Wrap and mail as you go. Not only does this save a last minute scramble, but it also assures pre-holiday delivery.

The same early-bird approach applies to Christmas cards. We all enjoy receiving them, so start now to gather addresses, cards and stamps to spread holiday cheer. If you think the list is too long to tackle, simplify card-sending by paring your list down to those you won't see to extend personal holiday preetings. Give the money you save on excess cards and stamps to your

favorite charity.

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